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Dramatic Publishing

THE JUNGLE BOOK

A Full-Length Play
by
JOSEPH ROBINETTE

Based on the Mowgli Stories of Rudyard Kipling



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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JOSEPH ROBINETTE

Based on the Mowgli stories of
RUDYARD KIPLING

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(THE JUNGLE BOOK)

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THE JUNGLE BOOK

A Full-Length Play
for 15-30 Actors - Flexible Ensemble Cast*
(Including Six Males and One Male Child)

CHARACTERS

RUDYARD KIPLING/MOWGLI .. a school boy/a wolf boy
FIELDING/SHERE KHAN a school boy/a tiger
HANLEY/TABAQUI a school boy/a jackal
PRICE/AKELA a headmaster/leader of the wolves
WILLIES/BAGHEERA a chaplain/a panther
CROFTS/BALOO a teacher/a bear
MOTHER WOLF Akela's mate
WOLF CUBS (2) children of Akela and Mother Wolf
CHILD (YOUNG MOWGLI) a boy
KAA a snake
HATHI an elephant
RANN a bird
OLD WOMAN (MASSUA) a villager
YOUNG WOMAN (DARI) a villager
WOLVES, MONKEYS jungle inhabitants

*See Production Notes for casting suggestions.

THE PLACE: A Prep School in England; A Jungle in India.

THE TIME: 1880.

The original production of *THE JUNGLE BOOK* was staged at Rowan College of New Jersey with the following cast (in alphabetical order):

Amy Adamek	Wolf Cub
Shelby Adams	Dari
Sean Barner	Young Mowgli
Nora B. Graneto	Wolf Cub
Jennifer Hearn	Kaa/Massua
Debra Heitmann	Mother Wolf
John K. Kucher	Willies/Bagheera
Elise Lepore	Wolf
Andrea Mings	Rann
William C. Morris	Hathi
Haasan O. Morse	Wolf
Joseph Ranoia	Fielding/Shere Khan
Dominic Sano	Hanley/Tabaqui
Jayson Stockdale	Rudyard Kipling/Mowgli
Jody Thorp	Wolf/Monkey
Paul E. Tonden	Price/Akela
Jonathon Townley	Wolf/Monkey
Matthew J. Zumbo	Crofts/Baloo

ACT ONE

SETTING: *At one side of the stage is a dormitory room at the United Services Boarding School, Devon, England. The remainder of the stage is in darkness.**

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: RUDYARD KIPLING, a sixteen-year-old boy, is sitting at a desk writing. A moment later he reads what he has written.

RUDYARD (*looking at his manuscript*). "It was seven o'clock of a warm evening in Seonee Hills when Father Wolf woke from his day's rest.

(He begins to write again. Two teenage boys, FIELDING and HANLEY, quietly enter the room, creep up to the desk and yell at RUDYARD who jumps.)

FIELDING and HANLEY. Indian boy, Indian boy, Indian boy!

RUDYARD. I'm not Indian. I'm British—just like you.

HANLEY. But you were born in India.

FIELDING. And monkeys are born in India. Perhaps he's a monkey. *(He and FIELDING mimic monkeys.)*

HANLEY. Or a hyena! *(He and FIELDING screech like hyenas and laugh.)*

* See Production Notes for scenery suggestions.

FIELDING. But with that round face—

HANLEY. —and those squinty eyes behind those glasses, he looks most like—

HANLEY and FIELDING. —a frog! (*They laugh uproariously.*)

HANLEY. A squatty little toad. (*He and FIELDING imitate frogs.*)

RUDYARD. Please go back to your own rooms. I'm studying.

FIELDING. Let's hear you croak, little frog. (*He grabs RUDYARD by the arm. RUDYARD emits a wolf howl.*)

HANLEY (*also grabbing RUDYARD*). That's not a frog. (*RUDYARD howls longer and louder.*)

FIELDING. Quiet. You'll bring up the headmaster. (*Again, RUDYARD howls, breaking away from them.*)

HANLEY. Be quiet!

FIELDING. Pipe down. You'll get us in trouble. (*The offstage voice of HEADMASTER PRICE is heard as RUDYARD howls again.*)

PRICE'S VOICE (*offstage*). Hullo! What's going on in there?

HANLEY. It's old man Price.

FIELDING. I knew that howling would bring him up here.

(He and HANLEY hide under the bed as RUDYARD howls once more. PRICE and WILLIES, a chaplain, enter.)

PRICE. Mr. Kipling!

RUDYARD (*embarrassed*). Oh...Sorry, Headmaster Price. Hello, Chaplain Willies.

WILLIES (*with tongue-in-cheek*). What a relief! I came prepared to administer last rites.

PRICE. What was all that baying about?

RUDYARD. I was just trying out a sound, sir—for a story I'm writing.

PRICE. Where does your story take place? An insane asylum?

RUDYARD. In the jungle, sir. I was trying to duplicate the sound of a—a wolf. I figure the more realistic my story, the better chance I have of winning the gold cup in Master Crofts' English class.

PRICE. Gold-plated cup. The United Services Boarding School cannot yet afford pure gold.

RUDYARD. Yes, sir.

PRICE. Well, Chaplain Willies, we found only one howling wolf up here, but when we were downstairs having our tea, it sounded more like a whole pack.

WILLIES. Perhaps it was a pack of wolves, Headmaster Price. (*He looks suspiciously at the bed.*) Were some of the boys up here teasing you again, Rudyard?

RUDYARD. Uh...no, sir.

WILLIES. Don't let them pick on you because of your size and looks. Maybe it's time you learned a bit of self-defense. (*Raising his voice as he moves toward the bed.*) Remind me sometime to tell you about my days as a boxer in the Queen's Navy. Undefeated, I was.

RUDYARD (*enthusiastically*). Yes, sir.

PRICE (*glancing at RUDYARD's manuscript*). I assume this story of yours takes place in India.

RUDYARD. That's right, sir.

PRICE. Do you wish you were still living there?

RUDYARD. I...I'm adjusting, I suppose. Anyway, I'll be returning to India when I graduate next year.

PRICE. You're fortunate to have parents who sent you back to England for a good education.

RUDYARD. I know, sir.

PRICE. Well, let us return to our tea, Chaplain Willies.

WILLIES. Rudyard, when the weather turns warm, I'll teach you some boxing moves.

RUDYARD. Thank you, sir.

PRICE. I thought the Bible taught us to be peacemakers, Chaplain Willies.

WILLIES. It does. But if neither party is willing to make peace, sometimes a little war is necessary. *(He and PRICE laugh and exit. HANLEY and FIELDING emerge from under the bed.)*

HANLEY. That was close.

FIELDING. You almost got us into trouble.

RUDYARD. It was your fault.

HANLEY. Couldn't take a little good-natured teasing, eh?

FIELDING. Now where were we, Hanley? *(They shove RUDYARD.)*

HANLEY. Playing with our little frog, Fielding.

(They jostle RUDYARD and make frog sounds until RUDYARD emits another loud howl. There is an immediate knock on the door. FIELDING and HANLEY again bolt for the bed but are stopped short as the door opens and CROFTS, a teacher, enters.)

CROFTS. Evening, gentlemen.

BOYS *(relieved)*. Hello, Master Crofts. Evening, sir. Etc.

CROFTS. I thought this was study hour.

HANLEY. It is. We're—we're working on our short stories.

CROFTS *(suspiciously)*. Perhaps I could see them.

FIELDING. Well, we haven't exactly started writing them yet. We were discussing, uh—

HANLEY. *Ideas*. You taught us, sir, we must *think* before we write.

FIELDING. Excellent advice, sir. Well, uh, now that we've thought—

HANLEY. —we can begin to write. Good night, sir. (*He and FIELDING exit quickly with a loudly whispered frog sound or two.*)

CROFTS. Kipling, I have a feeling you *have* begun to write.

RUDYARD. Yes, sir.

CROFTS. The jungle story you were telling me about?

RUDYARD (*holding up the manuscript*). Would you like to see what I've done so far?

CROFTS. It'll have to wait until class. I'm on my way to play rehearsal. *You* should join our drama group, Kipling. Didn't you tell me your father performs in plays back in India?

RUDYARD. My *mother*, sir. My father is the curator of a museum. But anyway, I prefer to write.

CROFTS. Maybe you've made the right choice. (*Glancing at the manuscript in RUDYARD's hand.*) Let's see...you need an apostrophe here and a capital "s" there.

RUDYARD (*making the corrections*). Thank you, sir.

CROFTS. And remember—don't overwrite. When in doubt, be brief.

RUDYARD. Yes, sir.

CROFTS. Well, on to rehearsal. (*Starting to leave, then stopping.*) By the way, did you ever decide on a name for your Indian boy—the one raised by wolves?

RUDYARD (*with a wry smile*). I think so, sir. I just came up with an idea—thanks to a couple of my "chums."

CROFTS. Well, good luck. There'll be keen competition for the gold cup. Even boys like Hanley and Fielding may buckle down for *that* honor.

RUDYARD. Yes, sir.

CROFTS. Good night.

(He exits. RUDYARD sits at his desk and begins to read aloud as the suggestion of a cave and jungle appears at C stage.)

RUDYARD. "It was seven o'clock of a warm evening in Seconee Hills when Father Wolf woke up from his day's rest and emerged from the inner den of his cave. His name was Akela, and he was the brave leader of the noblest wolf pack in the jungle."

(The lights dim on RUDYARD who continues writing as the lights come up on the interior of a cave. AKELA, a wolf, enters from a back room of the cave. He stretches and howls.)

AKELA. Augrh! It is time to hunt again.

(MOTHER WOLF and two CUBS enter from another room in the cave.)

MOTHER WOLF. Look, children, the moon is shining right into the mouth of the cave.

1ST CUB. You will have a good hunting tonight, Father.

2ND CUB. The moon will light your path.

(TABAQUI, a jackal, enters at the mouth of the cave.)

TABAQUI. Good luck go with you, O Chief of the Wolves.

MOTHER WOLF. Oh, no. Look who's here.

1ST CUB. Tabaqui, the jackal.

2ND CUB. I'll bet he wants something to eat.

TABAQUI. Evening, evening, evening. How is it with my friends, the wolves, this fine evening?

AKELA. We are not your friends, Tabaqui. We merely share the jungle with you.

TABAQUI (*sniffing about the cave*). And your food when poor Tabaqui is *soooo* hungry.

MOTHER WOLF. We do not have enough food even for ourselves. That is why Akela is going hunting tonight.

TABAQUI. But Tabaqui does not need much. Only a dish to lick—or—(*Looking around.*) I spy, I spy—a bone to chew. (*He picks up a bone from the cave floor or perhaps takes it from one of the CUBS who has brought it on.*) And there's a tad of meat left.

AKELA. Very well. Take the bone and leave.

TABAQUI. Don't worry, Akela. I won't bother you for food again. My friend, Shere Khan, the tiger, will be providing me with the remains of many feasts.

AKELA. Which is fine with us since Shere Khan hunts far away from here.

TABAQUI. Not anymore.

AKELA (*concerned*). What do you mean?

TABAQUI. He now hunts at the village where the cattle are plentiful.

MOTHER WOLF (*with alarm*). The village—?

AKELA. We do not bother the villagers or hunt their cattle.

TABAQUI. Maybe the wolves don't, but Shere Khan hunts wherever he pleases. (*He looks about the cave.*)

MOTHER WOLF. The villagers will be angry with us. They might even come here and burn our jungle with the red flower.

AKELA (*sarcastically*). We are very grateful to Shere Khan for putting us in danger.

TABAQUI. Shall I tell him of your gratitude?

AKELA (*grabbing TABAQUI by the neck*). Out, you mooching mongrel!

TABAQUI. How can such sweet children have such nasty parents? (*He laughs.*)

AKELA (*pushing TABAQUI out the door*). Out!

TABAQUI. I'm going! I'm going! (*He exits.*)

1ST CUB. Why does he always come to us for food?

AKELA. Tabaqui, the dish-licker, begs everyone for food.

MOTHER WOLF. But I'm not sure food was what he wanted tonight.

AKELA. What do you mean?

MOTHER WOLF. Did you see how he kept looking around the cave?

AKELA. For something to eat—that's all.

MOTHER WOLF. I suppose. But when it comes to Tabaqui, I'm always suspicious.

AKELA. This business about Shere Khan has me concerned. If I run into him tonight, he may be in for a fight.

MOTHER WOLF. No, avoid him. As the leader of the wolves, you should lead—not fight.

AKELA. Sometimes to lead *is* to fight—when all else fails.

MOTHER WOLF. Be careful.

1ST CUB. Bye, Father.

2ND CUB. Goodbye, Papa. Have a good hunt. (*The CUBS embrace AKELA.*)

AKELA. Farewell, my children. I'll return soon if I get a quick kill. (*He exits. The CUBS begin to play a hand game.*)

1ST CUB. You missed. My point.

2ND CUB. *My* point. You're the one who missed.

MOTHER WOLF. Children, I need you to help me clean the cave. And afterward, straighten up your den.

1ST CUB. Do we have to?

2ND CUB. We want to play.

MOTHER WOLF. What if the whole jungle wanted to play?

1ST CUB. Then we'd go out and play *with* them. (*They giggle. A noise is heard offstage.*)

2ND CUB. Listen—it sounds like someone is playing out there. (*Unintelligible sounds are heard offstage.*)

1ST CUB. Maybe it's Tabaqui again.

2ND CUB. I'll go see what it is.

1ST CUB. *I'll* go see what it is. (*They both exit running.*)

MOTHER WOLF. Children!...Anything to get out of work. (*Calling to offstage.*) If it's one of the monkey people tell him to go away...And if it's another cub, tell him you can't play this evening. (*A pause.*) Well...what's there?... Can you see anything? (*Worried.*) Children...why don't you answer me? What is it?

1ST CUB'S VOICE (*from offstage*). A cub!

MOTHER WOLF. A cub? Then tell him you can't play!

2ND CUB'S VOICE (*from offstage*). But Mother...look!

(The CUBS enter holding hands with a smiling CHILD who wears a breech cloth.)

MOTHER WOLF (*alarmed*). It's a human cub!

CHILD (YOUNG MOWGLI). KOOLta. KOOLta!* [*Doggies, doggies!*]

1ST CUB. Can we keep him?

MOTHER WOLF. What is he doing here?

2ND CUB. He can stay with me.

1ST CUB. He can stay with *me*.

MOTHER WOLF. He'll stay with no one. He must go back to his parents. They're probably out looking for him right now.

* *Hindi pronunciation—See Production Notes.*

CHILD. Hum TUMhay. PayCHAND karTAY hai. KahRAN tum HAHra bahHOOT bahl hai. [I like you. You're furry.]

1ST CUB. What is he saying?

MOTHER WOLF. I don't know. He speaks the language of humans.

2ND CUB. I'll teach him our language.

1ST CUB. I'll teach him.

MOTHER WOLF. Quiet, children...I wish your father were here. *(A noise is heard offstage, followed by a low growl.)*

2ND CUB. What was that?

MOTHER WOLF *(anxiously)*. Probably his parents. If they find the boy in here, they'll smoke us out with the red flower. Quick, children. Take him to the inner den.

CHILD. Yeh mahJAHdahr hai. [This is fun.]

MOTHER WOLF. And keep him quiet.

1ST CUB. Yes, Mother.

(The CUBS and CHILD exit. A moment later TABAQUI enters.)

TABAQUI *(calling to offstage)*. Here, Master. This is where I saw him. *(To MOTHER WOLF, somewhat sarcastically.)* Perhaps he went inside the cave of my dear friends—the wolves.

(SHERE KAHN, a tiger, enters.)

SHERE KHAN *(with a growl)*. Where is he?

MOTHER WOLF *(nervously)*. My husband? He has gone hunting.

SHERE KHAN. I'm not speaking of Akela. Where is the child?

MOTHER WOLF. Child?...My children are resting.